

## Emotions and Communication in Second/Additional Language: Getting Students Ready for an International Experience

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## EMOTIONS AND COMMUNICATION IN SECOND/ ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE: GETTING STUDENTS READY FOR AN INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

EMOCJE A KOMUNIKACJA W JĘZYKU OBCYM:  
 PRZYGOTOWANIE STUDENTÓW DO UDZIAŁU  
 W WYMIANACH MIĘDZYNARODOWYCH

### Keywords

emotions, SLA,  
 SL/FL classroom,  
 immersion,  
 expression of emo-  
 tions, perception  
 of emotions

**Summary:** Internationalisation of education is a global phenomenon which highlights the importance of successful communication processes on an unprecedented scale. Yet, there is little explicit information on the most effective ways of preparing students for the international educational experience of studying in another country. Research demonstrates that international students regularly report difficulties not just with the local language but using language in contexts and understanding the local culture of communication. This paper addresses the vital but often neglected notion of emotions and

\* This work is the result of collaboration between two researchers:  
 Dr Katarzyna Ożańska-Ponikwia, University of Bielsko-Biala, Poland,


**Słowa kluczowe**  
emocje,  
przyswajanie języka  
drugiego,  
immersja językowa,  
wyrażanie i postrzega-  
nie emocji w języku  
obcym

their importance in the communication process. It focuses on different aspects concerning the perception and expression of emotions in the second language, and on possible ways of incorporating them into the Second/Additional Language curriculum and bilingual education. The paper presents the results of a quantitative study examining the possible influence of the immersion in the L2 language and culture on the recognition and expression of emotions in that language. Research results suggest that even a very short stay in an L2 country can significantly enhance the ability to encode the expression and decode perception of emotions in the L2. The paper proposes that the ability to recognize and express emotions in second/additional languages is a critical skill that augments learners' communication. Consequently, the paper postulates the inclusion of teaching the recognition and expression of emotions in a target language into second/additional language education curriculum.

**Streszczenie:** Umieędzynarodowienie edukacji jest zjawiskiem globalnym. Jednocześnie niewiele informacji jest dostępnych na temat skutecznych sposobów przygotowania studentów do studiowania w za granicą. Badania pokazują, że studenci biorący udział w wymianach międzynarodowych regularnie zgłaszają trudności związane z posługiwaniem się językiem obcym, także w kontekście procesów socjolingwistycznych. Niniejszy artykuł dotyczy istotnego, ale często zaniedbywanego pojęcia emocji i ich znaczenia w procesie komunikacji. Koncentruje się na różnych aspektach dotyczących postrzegania

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Bielsko-Biala, Poland, and Dr Beata Webb, Bond University, Gold Coast, Australia. We work at different universities, in different countries and on different continents and share a professional passion for international education. Our dialogue, which resulted in this paper, intersects the fields of the internationalisation of education, student experience and affectivity in language learning. This collaboration was made possible through the platform of Study Abroad from the European Perspective (SAREP) Project, initiated by the European Commission of Science and Technology. Dr Katarzyna Ożańska-Ponikwia is a SAREP member representing Poland and Dr Beata Webb is an observer representing Australia. The SAREP project provided us with a unique platform for cross-institutional discussion on the ways educators can maximise the success of their students in Study Abroad contexts. This on-going cross-institutional collaboration would not have been possible without the SAREP Project, chaired by Dr Martin Howard, University College Cork, and our SAREP colleagues from universities across the globe.



i wyrażania emocji w języku obcym oraz na potencjalnych sposobach włączenia tychże do programu nauczania języków obcych. Artykuł przedstawia wyniki badania ilościowego skupiającego się na możliwym wpływie zanurzenia w kulturze i języku obcym na rozpoznawanie i wyrażanie emocji w tymże języku. Wyniki badań sugerują, że nawet bardzo krótki pobyt zagraniczny może znacznie zwiększyć zdolność wyrażania i rozpoznawania emocji w języku obcym. Proponuje się, aby umiejętność rozpoznawania i wyrażania emocji w języku drugim/obcym była postrzegana jako umiejętność kluczowa, która może znacznie wpłynąć na procesy komunikacyjne podczas wymian międzynarodowych, i tym samym została włączona do programów nauczania języków obcych.

## Introduction

Internationalisation of education is a global phenomenon which highlights the critical importance of successful communication processes. Making a decision to study in another country has far-reaching implications on the life of a person making this decision, typically affecting their friends, family and their future. International students participating in short- and long-term study abroad programs face many challenges and experience various difficulties in the host country. One of the challenges reported regularly by international students is the difficulty with understanding not just the local language but also the way this language is used in a sociocultural context, that is, the different ways of interpreting the message and the difficulty of understanding what the interlocutors “really mean” (Malczewska-Webb, 2014; Ryan & Carroll, 2005; Webb, 2014; 2015a; 2015b).

In order to take such learner needs into consideration, language educators must address the essential question of what can be done to ensure the best possible preparation of students for communicating successfully during their international educational experience. However, literature is rarely explicit on what aspects of language and culture must be included in the syllabus in order to maximise students’ successful communication during their international experience while they organise their new life in the new country.

This study examines difficulties second language (L2) learners experience with the recognition and expression of emotions in the L2. It is hoped that the research results will contribute to designing programs addressing the needs of international students to develop more effective communication skills through improving L2 emotional awareness. This paper, therefore, intersects two fields of enquiry within the international education and language acquisition contexts, emotional awareness and students' difficulties with communication. It also proposes the inclusion of the affective goal focusing on the notion of emotions into L2 language and culture education curriculum as a means of addressing the difficulties experienced by international students.

Accordingly, the paper addresses the vital but often neglected notion of emotions and their importance in the communication process. It focuses on the perception and expression of emotions in the second language and on possible ways of incorporating the elements of emotions education into the classroom setting and bilingual education. Section 1 outlines the background of the literature review. Next, Section 2 focuses on the expression and perception of emotions in the second/additional language, and Section 3 deals with emotions in the language curricula. Section 4 describes the research methodology employed for the purposes of the study. It outlines research questions and hypotheses, the participant sample, research instruments, the data presentation and analysis. The last two sections of the paper, 5 and 6, include the analysis and interpretation of the results, followed by their implications for teaching and the conclusions of the research.

## **1. International students and Emotions: A brief literature overview**

Emotions constitute a vital part of life as they enable people to function effectively in the language, culture and society they are part of. The globalized world "has brought about unprecedented access to information, global conversations and relationships" (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013, p. 8). According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (<https://en.unesco.org>), the number of students participating in transnational education has jumped from 0.8 million students in 1975, to a staggering 4.1 million students in 2013. As the UNESCO data are six years old, we can assume a much larger number today, especially when we consider the growth of individual countries. Australia, with its dynamic story of transnational education, provides a very interesting example of this progression. In 2018, there were 693,750 students on a student

visa in Australia – 10.7% more than were registered in 2017. The largest group (46%) included 399,078 students enrolled at Australian universities. This increase is consistent with the average 10.1% annual growth noted over the last ten years ([internationaleducation.gov.au](http://internationaleducation.gov.au)). Study abroad programs offer increasing opportunities for communication between students with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Often, this communication takes place between interlocutors who do not share the same first language (L1) or the same first culture (C1) (Stavans & Hoffman, 2014). Lorette & Dewaele (2015, p. 62) note that:

both the expression of one's own emotional state and the comprehension of others' emotional states appear to be less intuitive when the communication occurs in a foreign language (LX) than when the communication occurs in an L1.

On the one hand, it is important to point out that the ability to understand the emotional state of one's interlocutor is critical for interpreting the content of that interlocutor's utterances. On the other hand, the proposition expressed by a speaker could be interpreted very differently depending on the speaker's affective orientation regarding this proposition (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1989; Lorette & Dewaele, 2015, p. 62). The fact that languages differ significantly in terms of both emotional expression and in cultural scripts suggesting how people should feel or express their emotions is central for successful communication (Wierzbicka, 1999, p. 240). Consequently, in order to successfully communicate in the second/additional language, learners should master not only linguistic competence but also a sociolinguistic and sociocultural one. Regan, Howard & Lemée (2009, p. 3) support this idea with the following statement:

In our globalized multicultural/multilingual world, communities are constantly shifting and individuals move in and out of them. People need to adapt to that constant shift in communities and find their own place in the speech community which they currently inhabit. Knowledge of grammatical and structural elements of the L2 is only a part of the skills and competencies which are necessary for this process of adaptation; sociolinguistic and sociocultural competences are equally important. These competences condition the L2 speakers' view of themselves in the L2 speech community, their view of their own community as well as the way they are perceived by the L2 community in turn, and this consequently affects the place they occupy in that community or communities and their progress through it.

As pointed out by Regan et al. (2009), the competences necessary for being a successful member of any speech community cannot be limited to the knowledge of the grammatical and structural elements. Successful speech community members must, therefore, develop sociolinguistic and sociocultural competences which go beyond the knowledge of grammar or vocabulary. Learner knowledge limited to formal language concepts is insufficient, as learners must develop skills allowing them to negotiate meanings across languages and cultures in order to position themselves within a speech community (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013, p. 8; Malczewska-Webb, 2014).

Emotions form an intrinsic part of these sociolinguistic and sociocultural competencies, as researchers suggest that emotions are influenced and shaped by language and culture (Frijda, 1986; Lutz 1988; Matsumoto, 1994; 2006; Rosaldo 1984; Wierzbicka, 1999; cf. Ożańska-Ponikwia, 2012a, 2013; Malczewska-Webb, 2016). Rosaldo (1984, p. 304) states that emotions are “self-concerning, partly physical responses that are at the same time aspects of a moral and ideological attitude; emotions are feelings and cognitive constructions, linking person, action, and sociological milieu.” This suggests that emotions are not isolated mental states but that they are deeply rooted in language and culture (Ożańska-Ponikwia, 2013; Malczewska-Webb, 2016). In line with Rosaldo, Wierzbicka (2004, p. 98) wrote that “different languages are linked with different ways of thinking as well as different ways of feeling; they are linked with different attitudes, different ways of relating to people, different ways of expressing one’s feelings.” Additionally, Matsumoto (2006, p. 422) stressed the importance of the relationship between culture and emotions, as culture shapes the perception and the expression of emotions through the social constructions of reality:

Because cultural worldviews can differ across cultures, they can help to construct different self-concepts in people of different cultures. Like the concept of the self (Markus, 1977), which is also a social construction, cultural worldviews are ideological belief systems that individuals use as guidelines to explain their and others’ behaviors. When reappraising events, therefore, it is likely that individuals will tap into these cultural and personal ideologies to retrieve guidelines for ways in which they should evaluate or appraise emotion-eliciting situations.

Research on the relationship between perceiving and expressing emotions across cultures is complex, however, in its interpretations. While the studies

presented above underline the strength of the relationship between the users of the specific culture and the emotions they express and perceive, other studies examine the common ground across the users of different cultures. Accordingly, Moore, Romney, Hsia & Rush (1999) and Romney, Moore & Rush (1997) have demonstrated the commonly shared emotional knowledge across typologically distant languages. This suggests a shared cognitive cultural structure of all languages and important similarities in the perception of the emotion terms in dissimilar languages. Pavlenko (2008) provides a further interpretation of these similarities:

To say that emotion concepts vary does not imply that speakers of different languages have distinct physiological experiences. Rather, it means that they may have somewhat different vantage points from which to evaluate and interpret their own and others' emotional experiences (p. 150).

According to Pavlenko (2008), the reason for differences between the users of different cultures and the way they express or perceive emotions is not the result of different physiological or experiential conditioning. In other words, on the one hand, Pavlenko (2008) acknowledges the cultural intersection or a universal overlap in the way emotions are interpreted. On the other hand, however, Pavlenko (2008) also recognizes the different outcomes of these interpretations between the users of different cultures. These different outcomes stem from the different vantage points, the conceptual points of departure for their expression or interpretation of emotions. Starting from a different point of departure determined by a specific culture will determine a different trajectory of the interpretations of emotions.

The discussion outlined above demonstrates the shared view of the impact of culture on the ability to express and interpret emotions. Some researchers conclude that emotions are dependent and determined by specific culture. Others, while recognizing shared cognitive structure even between distant languages, also acknowledge the differences in interpreting emotions between the users of different cultures. As far as the role of this ability in communication is concerned, the interlocutors' recognition of emotions will either contribute to or hinder successful communication. Despite the fact that researchers agree on the importance of the skills in recognizing and expressing emotions for successful communication in a second/additional language, the development of these abilities is very often neglected in second/additional language curricula.



## 2. Expression and perception of emotions in the foreign language

Expressing emotions in a foreign language has been addressed in a number of studies which advocate a range of variables as potentially influencing emotional expression in a non-native language (Dewaele, 2009; 2010; Dewaele & Pavlenko, 2002; Ożańska-Ponikwia, 2012b; 2015; Pavlenko, 2004). These variables include learner background, language proficiency, gender, age, or sociocultural competence. First, the study undertaken by Dewaele & Pavlenko (2002) considered the impact of L2 proficiency, gender, and extraversion on the use of emotion words. The project involved Dutch L2 users of French and the potential influence of gender and sociocultural competence in their speech. It also examined the type of linguistic material on the use of emotion vocabulary among Russian L2 users of English. The reported results suggested that gender, level of proficiency and extraversion could predict the number of emotion lemmas and word tokens in participants' speech. The statistical analysis of the study of Russian L2 users of English showed that gender and type of linguistic material influenced the production of emotion lemmas. As far as sociocultural competence is concerned, Russian L2 users of English, when speaking both English and Russian, followed the linguistic pattern of monolingual Americans favouring the adjectival (typical for English), rather than the verbal (typical for Russian and other Slavonic languages) pattern of expressing emotions (Dewaele & Pavlenko, 2002). This suggests that L2 users might change their linguistic patterns of expressing emotions, shifting from the patterns predominant in their L1 to the patterns typical of the L2 users following their immersion in the L2 culture. Interestingly, this change relates also to their use of the mother tongue, where they also followed the L2 patterns of expressing emotions.

Furthermore, Ożańska-Ponikwia's (2012b) study on Polish L2 users of English examined factors influencing emotional expression in a foreign language. The statistical analysis of the responses to an online questionnaire measuring the expression of emotions in a second/additional language established the link between (1) the L2 use, self-perceived L2 proficiency and frequent contact with the L2, and (2) the expression of emotions in a foreign language. Ożańska-Ponikwia's (2015) next study, involving a similar group of informants, showed a correlation between expressing emotions in the L2 and the length of stay in the UK and/or Ireland. The participants who lived in the UK and/or Ireland for a shorter period of time were expressing emotions in the L2 to

a lesser degree than informants who had resided in those countries longer. These differences were not affected by other examined factors, as both groups declared positive attitudes towards the L2 and a similar level of self-perceived L2 proficiency. These results suggest that emotional expression in a non-native language is linked to a number of sociocultural and sociolinguistic factors and is not simply a matter of a well-developed linguistic competence in a specific language (Ożańska-Ponikwia, 2015, p. 38).

Regarding perception of emotions in a foreign language, researchers have investigated a number of factors related to learners' background and linguistic performance (Rintell, 1984; Graham, Hamblin & Feldstein, 2001; Scherer, Banse & Wallboot, 2001; Lorette & Dewaele, 2015). In her pioneering work, Rintell (1984) asked Arabic, Chinese and Spanish informants to listen to the taped conversations in their L2 (English), to identify the emotions expressed on the tape and to rate their intensity. The results of the study determined that L2 proficiency and native language had a strong effect on the perception of emotions in the L2. Similar results were reported by Graham et al. (2001), who found that the users' first language, particularly when it is typologically similar to L2, facilitates perception and understanding of emotions in a foreign language. Lorette and Dewaele (2015) supported these findings, as their results confirmed a significant positive relationship between L2 proficiency and the ability to recognize emotions. In addition, a significant effect of L1 culture was also found in the scores of the ability for recognizing emotions, with Asian L2 users of English scoring significantly lower than European English L2 users (Lorette & Dewaele, 2015). Furthermore, Scherer et al.'s (2001) research on vocal emotion recognition confirmed that the country of origin influenced emotion recognition rate. Graham et al. (2001) also discovered that L2 learners of English enrolled in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) courses had difficulty in identifying and interpreting vocal emotional cues in L2 speech. These studies substantiate the view that perceptions of emotions in another language are influenced by the speaker's linguistic and cultural background and by their L2 proficiency.

Other research outcomes suggest that learning an additional language may have an impact on emotion recognition ability (Dromey, Silveira & Sandor, 2005; Lorette & Dewaele, 2015). Accordingly, in the Dromey et al. (2005) study, two cohorts – L2 English users and monolingual L1 English speakers – achieved similar results in the recognition of affective prosody. The authors established that being a first language user does not guarantee higher scores

on the emotion recognition ability in that language when compared to the L2 users of that language. In fact, they concluded that the high results in the L2 user group were influenced by this group having studied an additional language/additional languages. They suggested that learning a second/additional language reinforces sensitivity to certain aspects of speech, which, in turn, could facilitate the ability to improve the recognition of general emotions. The results of Lorette and Dewaele's (2015) research also support this view. In their study, participants were asked to identify six basic emotions – anger, sadness, disgust, surprise, fear and happiness – presented by a native English-speaking actress in audiovisual clips. Despite the L2 users achieving lower proficiency scores, both the English L1 users and the English L2 users' scores of the ability for emotion recognition exhibited strong similarities. Similarly to the previous study, the L2 users had studied more languages than the English L1 users, which might have influenced their abilities to recognize emotions in a second/additional language.

Reiterating Lorette and Dewaele's (2015, p. 62) conclusions, "it thus seems that audiovisual input allows advanced LX users to recognize emotions in LX as well as L1 users. That said, LX proficiency and L1 culture do have an effect on emotion recognition ability." The research outcomes outlined above suggest that the ability to express and interpret emotions in a second/additional language is influenced by many factors, including speakers' linguistic and cultural background, L2 proficiency, gender, age and sociocultural competence. These factors are also associated with the speakers' length of stay in the country where the target language is spoken as the main language. To recapitulate, many factors influence the expression and perception of emotion, such as second/additional language proficiency and speakers' linguistic and cultural background. These factors may diminish language learners' socioculturally appropriate recognition and expression of emotions, which, in turn, may erode successful communication. However, research outcomes also demonstrate that with adequate exposure to the target language and culture, preferably in the naturalistic setting, the ability to recognize emotions in the second/additional language might be developed to the first language users' standards.

### 3. Emotions in the Second/Additional Language education syllabus

The decision concerning the selection of appropriate elements necessary to design a language program addressing the needs of international students

is a difficult one. Language educators have consistently attempted to define the elements of language education which would equip learners with the knowledge and skills necessary for successful communication in the second/additional language (Baker, 2001; van Ek, 1986; 1987; Swain, 1986; Young, 1999). These definitions, which have continued to evolve over time, have determined the educational goals set for language curricula. Linguists have focused on various aspects of what language learners need to study in order to achieve the overall goal of being able to communicate in the target language. This section examines different aspects and models of language competence which could provide a framework for including the elements of affective domain, specifically, emotion education, into the target language program for students planning to participate in Study Abroad programs.

In the work on communicative competence developed in the 1980s, van Ek's (1986; 1987) concept specified six different forms of language competence, the acquisition of which was perceived as essential for successful communication. The model included the following competences: linguistic competence, which involved following the rules of the language; sociolinguistic competence, which covered the awareness of choosing the right forms depending on the context of use; discourse competence, which was defined as an ability to use appropriate strategies in the construction of texts, for example, the ability to initiate and participate in sustained conversations. Strategic competence, the fourth, referred to communication strategies employed during difficulties with communication, while the fifth – socio-cultural competence – involved the “awareness of the sociocultural context in which the language concerned is used by native speakers and the ways in which this context affects the choice and the communicative effect of particular language forms” (van Ek, 1987, p. 8; cf. Baker, 2001). The sixth – social competence – pertained to the ability to use particular social strategies to achieve communicative goals.

The competences defined by van Ek (1987) as necessary for successful communication in the second/additional language focus to a large extent on linguistic competence. However, affective elements must be included in at least some of these competences in order for the learner to achieve successful communication. For example, in the discourse competence, appropriate strategies must take into consideration the expression and recognition of emotions. Also, communication strategies in the strategic and sociocultural competences require emotional awareness in the target language in order to ensure L2 learners' successful communication.

Interestingly, as early as in 1986, Swain (1986) suggested that it is crucial to give students a chance to engage in meaningful oral interactions, either in the classroom setting or outside of it. Exposing learners to realistic conversations in a foreign language and getting them to participate would give them an opportunity to develop all the competences necessary for communication in a non-native language. On the one hand, van Ek (1987) provides a model for the possible inclusion of emotional awareness into the goals-setting stage of the language curriculum suitable for international students studying in the second/additional language. On the other hand, Swain (1986) suggests oral interactions in and out of the classroom as a strategy for their development.

Other researchers also promote the inclusion of the elements of emotional awareness education in language curricula. Already in 1999, Young (1999) noted a consistent interest in sociocultural aspects of SLA in such domains as pragmatics, FL/SL classroom, or face-to-face communication. Since then, many educators have investigated Vygotsky's sociocultural theories of language acquisition, and the interest in his work has been burgeoning. His beliefs that any human behaviour is mediated by language and that each human action can be interpreted in multiple ways have been explored for their applications to teaching (Eun & Lim, 2009). Also, his emphasis on meaning and mediation (Vygotsky, 1987; 1997) has strong implications for teaching (Eun & Lim, 2009). Moreover, the ability to recognize emotions and express them appropriately in a target language forms one of the key tools in interpreting and delivering accurate and effective messages. This model, therefore, provides a possible theoretical basis for including the theme of emotion awareness in the goals and practices of language programs.

Furthermore, Regan et al. (2009, p. 6) suggested that:

Sociocultural competence broadens the knowledge of cultural and social norms present in every society and as a result facilitates the communication process, but also enlarges the emotional repertoire by means of which the acquisition of new concepts takes place, a crucial factor when we take the expression of emotions in a foreign language into account.

In the quote above, Regan et al. (2009) explicitly state that the development of learners' emotional repertoire addresses one of the goals of sociocultural competence. Indeed, Vygotsky (1987) emphasized the importance of learning different speech modes due to the lack of direct correspondence between form and meaning and the fact that understanding the message depends on the

context and the purpose of the interlocutors. Vygotsky (1987), in fact, stated that this knowledge should be explicitly taught to L2 learners. Eun & Lim (2009) validate Vygotsky's theory, and their research confirms the effectiveness of explicit teaching of the pragmatics of language to L2 learners. The teaching of speech codes included the teaching of emotional awareness of the target language and culture explicitly. Therefore, emotional awareness as one of the aspects of speech pragmatics can be taught as a combination of explicit teaching in meaningful and simulated-authentic classroom interactions.

The usefulness and effectiveness of authentic interactions in teaching learners emotional awareness was also demonstrated by Lorette and Dewaele (2015) decades after Vygotsky proposed it in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. According to Lorette and Dewaele (2015, p. 81), high proficiency L2 users of English who were experienced in authentic interactions were able to recognize basic emotions in English speech as accurately as L1 users of English even though the L2 users' levels of proficiency were much lower. L2 users' proficiency in English was related to emotion recognition ability in English, so "these findings suggest that the threshold for the successful recognition of basic emotions in an LX is probably lower than has been assumed so far: one does not need to be fully proficient in order to be able to accurately infer the emotional state of an interlocutor, at least in the case of basic emotions" (Lorette & Dewaele, 2015, p. 81).

Research presented in this section bears important implications for the introduction of emotion awareness into the goals and the practices of language programs for international students who intend to study in the target language and culture. To sum up this section, the practices promoting the affective aspect of communication – emotional awareness – can be promoted with strategies based on sociocultural theory of language acquisition. These strategies should include the introduction of meaningful and realistic conversations connected to learners' real lives and their real world into the second/additional language classes. The behaviour and speech modes in those conversations should also be taught explicitly. Additionally, the use of the authentic materials including videos or audio recordings might facilitate emotion recognition ability in the second/additional language learners at lower levels of proficiency than it was previously believed.

## 4. Study description

**4.1. Research questions and hypothesis.** The literature review demonstrated that some variables such as L2 proficiency, culture or gender can influence emotion recognition ability in the L2. Additionally, some L2 users with authentic exposure to the target language and culture through living in the target language country demonstrated the ability to recognize emotions in the L2 at a level equal to the users of the first language and culture. Self-perceived L2 proficiency, the degree of L2 use, gender and sociolinguistic competence were related to the expression of emotions in the second/additional language. Motivated by these findings, a quantitative study was designed in order to investigate the influence of immersion in the L2 language and culture on self-reported ability to recognize and express emotions in the target language.

The study aims to address the following research questions:

1. What is the level of self-reported ability to recognize and express emotions in L2 by Polish L2 users of English who had been immersed in the L2 language and culture?
2. What is the level of self-reported ability to recognize and express emotions in the L2 by Polish L2 users of English who had not been immersed in the L2 language and culture?
3. Is there a difference in self-reported ability to recognize and express emotions in the L2 between Polish L2 users of English who had been immersed in the L2 language and culture and those who had not been immersed?

It is hypothesized that informants who were immersed in the L2 language and culture will report significantly fewer problems with the ability to recognize and express emotions in the L2 in comparison to the non-immersion group.

**4.2. Participants.** The participants of the present study included seventy-one (71) Polish L2 users of English who were further divided into two groups according to the length of immersion in the L2 language and culture. Dividing the informants into two groups allowed for a study of the possible differences between (1) thirty-five (35) Polish participants who had never lived outside Poland and (2) the second group of thirty-six (36) participants who had lived in England and had been immersed in the L2 culture. While the first cohort had not had the experience of interactions with L1 users of English, the second cohort experienced authentic interactions with the L1 users of English



during their stays in the UK of between one and six months. Further details characterizing both groups are presented below.

**4.2.1. The non-immersion group.** The “non-immersion” group consisted of 35 informants who had never lived in an English-speaking country. Females represented 70% of the sample ( $n = 24$ ). Their age varied from 20 to 57, with 60% ( $n = 21$ ) of the participants in their twenties, 34% ( $n = 12$ ) of the sample in their thirties and the remaining 6% ( $n = 2$ ) of the participants either in their forties or fifties (Mean = 28.1, SD = 7.1). As far as their educational level was concerned, 20% ( $n=7$ ) of the sample had vocational education, 25% ( $n = 9$ ) of the sample reported completing secondary education, 49% ( $n =17$ ) had a Bachelor of Arts degree, and the remaining 6% ( $n = 2$ ) completed primary education (Mean = 3.2, SD = .9). Their self-perceived L2 proficiency varied from the beginner level (11%) to high proficiency (52%), with 25% ( $n = 9$ ) rating themselves as pre-intermediate and the remaining 12% ( $n = 4$ ) as upper-intermediate (Mean = 4.2, SD = 1.3).

**4.2.2. The immersion group.** The “immersion” group consisted of 36 informants who had lived in the UK from one to six months. 70% ( $n = 25$ ) of the participants were females. More than half of the informants ( $n = 20$ ) inhabited the UK from one to three months, 14% ( $n = 5$ ) lived abroad from three to four months and the remaining 30% ( $n = 11$ ) from five to six months (Mean = 3.76, SD = 1.23). The participants’ ages were between 17 and 49 years old, with 70% ( $n = 25$ ) of the participants in their twenties, 24% ( $n = 9$ ) in their thirties and the remaining 6% ( $n = 2$ ) in their forties (Mean = 27.19, SD = 6.34). As far as their level of education was concerned, 36% ( $n = 13$ ) of the sample obtained vocational education, 8% ( $n = 3$ ) reported the completion of the secondary education, 53% ( $n = 19$ ) completed a Bachelor of Arts degree and the remaining person, 3% ( $n = 1$ ), completed a Master of Arts degree (Mean = 3.17, SD = 1.10). Their self-perceived L2 proficiency varied from the beginner level, 3% ( $n = 1$ ), to the advanced level, 47% ( $n = 16$ ), with more than one-third (36%;  $n = 14$ ) rating themselves as upper-intermediate and the remaining 14% ( $n = 5$ ) as pre-intermediate (Mean = 4.28, SD = .85) (Ożańska-Ponikwia, 2017).

A detailed comparison between both groups is presented in Table 1.



Table 1

*“Non-immersion” group and “Immersion” group- comparison*

	“non-immersion” group	“immersion” group
Gender	70% females, 30% males	70% females, 30% males
Age	Mean = 28.1, SD = 7.1	Mean = 27.1, SD = 6.3
Self-perceived L2 proficiency	Mean = 4.2, SD = 1.3	Mean = 4.2, SD = .8
Educational level	Mean = 3.2, SD = .9	Mean = 3.1, SD = 1
Emotional intelligence	Mean = 4.5, SD = .4	Mean = 4.6, SD = .6

Source: own data source.

It is important to note, as is demonstrated in the table above, that both groups exhibited very similar characteristics as far as their number and all other measured variables were concerned. The only significant difference between the researched groups was the immersion in the L2 language and culture or the lack of it.

**4.3. Research instruments.** This study employed the following three research instruments: two questionnaires (Personal background questionnaire; Trait Emotional Intelligence questionnaire-TEIQue) and the answers to two questions concerning difficulties in perception and expression of emotions in the foreign language. The first questionnaire used in the study was the personal background questionnaire, which comprised 10 questions measuring age, gender, educational level, overall self-perceived L2 proficiency and the length of stay in an ESC (Ożańska-Ponikwia, 2013).

The second questionnaire employed for the purpose of the study was the Trait Emotional Intelligence questionnaire-TEIQue. The Trait Emotional Intelligence questionnaire (Petrides & Furnham, 2003) consisted of 153 items rated on a seven-point Likert scale. This questionnaire was included in order to verify the level of emotional intelligence of the informants as a factor potentially influencing the results. It was used in the Polish adaptation developed by Wytykowska and Petrides (2007).

The third research instrument included two questions about difficulties in the perception and expression of emotions in the L2 scale. This was adapted from Ożańska-Ponikwia (2013, p. 66). It was based on the feedback to two statements: “I find it difficult to express emotions in English” and “I find it

difficult to understand emotions in English.” Informants were to choose an answer from five options: 1 – Strongly disagree; 2 – Disagree; 3 – Neutral; 4 – Agree; and 5 – Strongly Agree.

## 5. Data analysis and interpretation

The main research question of this study concerned a possible difference in self-reported ability to recognize and express emotions in L2 between Polish L2 users of English who had been immersed in the L2 language and culture and those who had not been immersed. In order to determine the answer to this research question, a t-test analysis was performed, the results of which are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

*Difficulties in expression and perception of emotions in the L2 (t-test)*

Variable	Length of stay	Mean	SD	t	df	p-value
Expression of emotions	Non-immersion	2.57	1.199	2.476	69	.016
	Immersion	1.28	1.132			
Perception of emotions	Non-immersion	2.52	1.151	2.391	69	.023
	Immersion	1.85	1.131			

Source: own data source.

The data obtained suggests statistically significant differences between the two cohorts. As far as the self-reported perception of emotions is concerned, the mean for the non-immersion cohort was 2.52, and 1.85 for the immersion cohort. This shows that the non-immersion group experienced more self-reported difficulties with the recognition of emotions in L2. The results of the t-test analysis, with the score of 2.47 and p-value of .23, suggest the statistical difference between the two cohorts. Very similar patterns were found in the question concerning the expression of emotions, with the mean self-reported expression of emotion for the non-immersion group of 2.57 and the lower 1.28 for the immersion group. The t-test results, with the score of 2.39 and the p-value of 0.16, also demonstrated the statistical difference between the

two cohorts as far as the self-reported expression of emotions was concerned. Consequently, in the case of both questions concerning difficulties with the perception and the expression of emotions in the foreign language, the non-immersion group scored significantly higher than the immersion one. These results may indicate that the non-immersion participants experience more difficulties with expressing or recognizing emotions in the L2 than the informants in the immersion group.

Additionally, the immersion group scored significantly lower on these self-reported questions overall. This may also demonstrate that the immersion process and having engaged in authentic communicative situations, with emotional perception and expression forming an intrinsic part of authentic discourse, significantly increased their ability to express and decode emotions in the second/additional language. It was also observed that, surprisingly, the immersion group self-reported more difficulties with the recognition of emotions than with their expression. This might indicate that active participation in everyday authentic conversations improves the general ability to express and decode emotions in the foreign language. However, the emotional recognition in the non-native language causes relatively more difficulties to the L2 users of that language than the emotional expression in it.

The results of the answers to the two self-reported questions support the research hypothesis, which postulated that the informants who had been exposed to the L2 language and culture would self-report significantly fewer problems with emotional recognition and expression in L2. Indeed, the informants from the immersion group reported significantly fewer difficulties in emotional expression and recognition in the foreign language in comparison to the informants from the non-immersion group. It is important to note that the scores of the non-immersion group concerning the answers to both questions were almost identical (Mean = 2.57 and Mean = 2.52). Furthermore, the scores of the immersion group were significantly lower. These results also indicated that even if, overall, the immersion group experienced fewer problems with the emotional expression and recognition of emotions in the L2, it is the recognition of emotions that is more problematic to the participants of this group (Mean = 1.28 and Mean = 1.85).

The results of the study support previous research suggesting that the ability to identify and interpret emotions in L2 speech might be enhanced by natural exposure to the L2 in a native context (Graham et al., 2001; Lorette & Dewaele, 2015). The research project did not investigate the factors discussed in

the overview of literature including the potential influence of L2 proficiency (Dewaele & Pavlenko, 2002; Lorette & Dewaele, 2015; Ożańska-Ponikwia, 2012b), number of known languages (Dromey et al., 2005) or target language and culture on emotional recognition (Banse & Wallboot, 2001; Graham et al., 2001; Lorette & Dewaele, 2015; Rintell, 1984), as the researched sample was balanced in relation to these variables. Therefore, the study focused on the possible influence of the immersion in the L2 language and culture on emotional recognition and expression in the non-native language.

Another interesting finding concerns the amount of exposure to L2 language and culture which may influence the L2 emotional awareness. Previously presented research suggests that the natural exposure needs to be extensive in order to improve the L2 emotional awareness (Graham et al., 2001; Lorette & Dewaele, 2015). While the rule of “the more, the better” certainly applies in this context, the results of this study show that even a short (Mean = 3,76 months) immersion in the L2 culture could significantly influence and facilitate the recognition and expression of emotions in the target language.

To sum up, the current study investigated the self-reported recognition and expression of emotions in the L2 language, English, by the users of Polish as their first language. The study investigated the differences between the two cohorts, one of them having had the exposure to authentic language and culture situations while living in England and the other without the naturalistic experience. The study demonstrated statistically significant differences between the two cohorts in self-reported recognition and expression of emotions in L2. Consequently, the results indicated that the exposure to authentic language and culture situations influence the ability to recognize and express emotions in L2. Further, the length of the exposure necessary for having an impact on that ability appeared significantly shorter than the length suggested as influential in previous studies. This shows that even a short exposure to L2 language and culture may sensitise L2 users to emotion expression and recognition.

## **6. Implications for teaching and conclusions: What to teach?**

The paper advocates a number of recommendations which have implications for language teachers and language curricula, and consequently, for language learners, as some of them will inevitably become international study-abroad students. As international students regularly report difficulties using not just the target language, but using the language in sociocultural contexts, it is

essential to address the need for improving student communication skills in language programs. Defining communicative competence as the basis for language curriculum development has been debated over decades, with a gradual shift towards highlighting its complexity and the inclusion of more and more elements beyond the formal language. Ironically, this debate is neither new nor are its results systematically manifested in language programs. Nearly a century ago, Vygotsky voiced the importance of teaching L2 speech mode interpretations, already at the time pointing to the classroom teaching implications and proposing practical solutions for classroom teaching. According to the sociocultural theory, such interpretations involve the ability to interpret interlocutors' emotional messages and intentions. Moreover, as this ability plays a crucial role in successful communication, learners must, therefore, be taught this explicitly. More recent research on affectivity also stresses the link between the ability to decode and encode emotions and learners' background. In consequence, the not-so-new sociocultural theory and the recent research outcomes follow the same trajectory of the need for emotional L2 awareness in language curricula.

Following the research-based decision supporting the inclusion of the language education promoting emotional L2 awareness, further research also contributes with possible suggestions on how and when to do it. On the one hand, studies propose that L2 learners' high level of proficiency may not be as crucial as was previously believed. This validates the view that the ability to encode and decode emotions can and should be introduced to students at different levels of proficiency and not only to learners at an advanced level of proficiency. Students, consequently, should be studying the recognition of L2 emotions and their expression throughout their studies of language at different levels of proficiency. Of the two, more focus should be directed towards the development of the encoding ability as this appears to be more problematic for the learners.

Other research outcomes provide information on possible strategies employed for developing the L2 emotional awareness. Most importantly, all studies suggest that L2 learners learn L2 emotional competence through naturalistic exposure and through classroom practice. Both implicit and explicit approaches have been proposed in different educational contexts. On the one hand, explicit teaching and simulated authentic interactions in the classroom setting are proposed, such as designing an extended vocabulary repertoire referring to emotions (Dewaele, 2005). On the other hand, research, including

the results of this study, shows that the exposure to the target language and culture provide a very effective way of developing the L2 emotional awareness. The outcomes from the current study implicate that even a short stay in the country where the target language is spoken and even a brief exposure to the target culture can enhance the recognition and expression of L2 emotions. This means that any study abroad program in the target language will assist in the development of emotional awareness.

To conclude, research suggests that the ability to decode and encode L2 emotions is a very important factor in developing learners' effective communication skills. Developing communication skills beyond the formal language, while important for all language learners, is critical for international students starting a new life in another country. Conversely, the lack of attention in language programs to L2 emotional education can result in the limited ability for interpreting and encoding emotions, which, in turn, will affect and limit learners' ability to express themselves appropriately.

With the strong research-driven message promoting emotional L2 awareness for all learners and its particular significance for international students, it is negligent not to include these elements in language and culture curricula.

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